

▶ AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH.....	1
▶ SPOTLIGHT ON ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY	2
▶ PROMISING PRACTICES.....	3
▶ DISABILITY RESOURCES	3



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Autism Awareness Month

Autism Awareness Month is celebrated in April of each year. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is the fastest growing developmental disability in the United States. Approximately 200,000 teenagers with ASDs will transition to adulthood in the next 5 years, and enter post-secondary education, vocational programs, or the workforce. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, ASDs are neurodevelopmental disorders with a variety of symptoms and levels of impairment that vary by individual. The term "spectrum" refers to the wide range of symptoms, skills, and levels of impairment, or disability, that individuals with ASD can have. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders - 5th Edition, the essential features of ASD are: persistent impairment in social communication and social interaction; restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests or activities; present from early childhood; behavior limits or impairs everyday functioning; behavior is not better explained by intellectual disability. The severity and impact of these symptoms and resulting functional limitations vary for each individual. There are many myths that exist about individuals with ASD. Autism Awareness Month brings an opportunity for public awareness and education about ASD. Penobscot JCC and Pittsburgh JCC held activities in the month of April to celebrate Autism Awareness Month and build awareness on their center.



Students at Penobscot JCC participate in the Autism Walk 2014

Students and staff at Penobscot JCC participated in a variety of activities to raise awareness of ASD. A group of students planned the month's events and activities. Materials were made available in the recreation department for students and staff to create their own Autism Awareness pins. Students created ASD themed posters that were hung throughout the campus. All students had the opportunity to participate in the Knowledge Scavenger Hunt. The scavenger hunt was created by students that put together 5 posters with information and facts about ASD that were placed throughout center. Students were then given a paper with 10 questions and had to find each poster to locate the answers. Eighty-two students and three staff participated in the Autism Walk 2014. The center ended the month with a fantastic presentation by Deborah Rooks-Ellis of the University of Maine Autism Institute.

The Pittsburgh JCC's decision to participate in Autism Awareness Week began with a student request. As a result of the student's interest, disability awareness, and advocacy, the center's Academic Disability Coordinator acquired posters and pamphlets from the national awareness website that were displayed across the center. The center also acquired blue ribbons and passed them out to all staff and students to wear during the awareness week.



Edward Scarpino, DC, and Barbara Lloyd, HWM of Pittsburg JCC at the Autism Awareness booth

- Contributed by Dawn Fenandez, Disability Coordinator, Penobscot JCC, and Edward Scarpino, Disability Coordinator, Pittsburg JCC.

Spotlight on Assistive Technology

More now than ever, students' diverse learning styles and needs challenge instructors to address their needs where they are and in non-traditional ways. The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) is a research and development organization identifying Universal Design for Learning (UDL) opportunities in education, work, and daily living. CAST recently presented a webinar on helping students' develop literacy skills through UDL technology and classroom techniques. The premise of the webinar was, in order for students to engage in learning and stay motivated, instructors must present material in different ways for students to retain their learning and express their new knowledge in their own way. The webinar emphasized UDL in education as a great equalizer because it offers activities and technologies that all students are able to participate in and use without singling out students with disabilities who require accommodations and accessibility supports to engage in learning. The presenter also provided a number of resources and teaching strategies offered by both CAST and other UDL vendors to help readers maximize their learning potential. The following are some of these resources.

Book Builder

(<http://bookbuilder.cast.org/>)

Book Builder is a CAST-developed website designed to help students create, share, publish, and read digital books according to their needs, interest and skills. The site offers text-to-speech, audio, and translation features to assist students in authoring, sharing and reviewing their class work. This would be a good tool for students who need to have materials read to them or who require repetition.



Kurzweil

<http://www.kurzweilededu.com/products/k3000-win.html>

Kurzweil is an assistive technology, text-to-speech learning tool that supports the concept of UDL with a suite of reading, writing, test taking and study skill tools that make subject materials accessible to all students. Kurzweil offers a free trial for the software, but there is a cost to use the software after the free trial.



Shmoop

<http://www.shmoop.com/>

This site provides guides to over 200 classic novels including summaries, themes, character analysis, photos, quotes, and quizzes. It also includes a step-by-step a writing tool.



Skitch

<http://evernote.com/skitch/>

This app allows students to take a picture and mark it up, highlight, or annotate it. It provides a quick method to capture concepts, ideas, and images for sharing and feedback. This app allows students or their instructors to highlight or make notes on important information within the text.



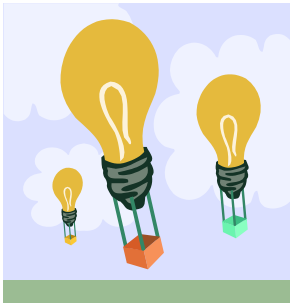
Lesson Builder

<http://lessonbuilder.cast.org/>

Lesson Builder is a free resource that allows instructors to create or adapt lessons that meet the needs of diverse groups of learners with guidance from CAST. Academic and trade instructors can create lessons using the UDL model that will be easily adaptable to meet a wide range of learning levels and abilities.

For more great literacy tools visit -
<http://udltechtoolkit.wikispaces.com/Literacy+tools>

Promising Practices



Los Angeles JCC: The center mental health consultants (CMHCs) are very involved in teaching students about their disability, including providing each student with a disability a handout that describes the functional limitations of his/her disability and provides ideas for compensatory strategies.

Ramey JCC: The disability coordinator (DC) reviewed all training achievement record (TARs) and broke down more complex line items into smaller parts in order for instructors and students to work on completing TAR requirements in steps.

Cascades JCC: The DC has designated drop-in hours posted in wellness for students to come by and discuss any accommodation-related needs or concerns.

Exeter JCC: There is a strong focus on accommodations during work-based learning (WBL) and transition. The center has a reasonable accommodation committee (RAC) meeting devoted just to meeting the needs of students in transition. Career transition staff and WBL staff are regular participants in the RAC so they know early on if students will have accommodation needs once they get to this phase of the program or after Job Corps.

Jacksonville JCC: Career transition readiness staff, WBL staff, and the academic resource instructor/DC meet monthly to discuss the needs of students with accommodation plans who are entering WBL or the transition phase of program.

Disability Resources

The Autism Society

The **Autism Society** (<http://www.autism-society.org/>) is a leading ASD resource for individuals with ASD and their families, educators, and service providers. The website provide information on how to navigate services; a link to Autism Source, an online database that connects to ASD resources (<http://www.autismsource.org/>); information about living with ASD as an adult; considerations when making decisions about employment, residential and houses options; and challenges related to social situations and navigating relationship.

Autism Speaks

The Autism Speaks (<http://www.autismspeaks.org/>) is a well-established resource for parents and educators working to serve students on the spectrum. Their website provides information about what Autism is, services for families, advocacy, current research about and related to Autism, and includes an Autism Apps (<http://www.autismspeaks.org/autism-apps>) page that lists different apps that support the needs of individuals with ASD, rating, age group, and cost.

Autism Speaks features several helpful tool kits including a Transition Tool Kit. The Transition Tool Kit (<http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits/transition-tool-kit>) focuses on providing information and resources for adolescents from 14 to 22 transitioning to adulthood. Some of the topics covered in this toolkit include self-advocacy, transition planning, community living, employment and other options, post-secondary educational opportunities, housing, legal matters, health, internet, technology, and safety, and additional resources.

Autism Speaks also features an Employment Tool Kit <http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits/employment>. This tool kit includes information on the following topics; benefits and funding, employment models, job search, transportation options, resumes, cover letters, and applicant ions, accommodation and disclosure, and understanding the social elements of the job, employment rights, employment resources, and step by step guide to employment. The links on the next page contain resources from the Autism Speaks Employment Tool Kit.

Disability Resources (cont'd)

Autism Speaks (cont'd)

- ▶ PDF on accommodation and disclosure
http://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/docs/etk_accommodations_and_disclosure.pdf
- ▶ PDF on employment rights
http://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/docs/etk_my_employment_rights.pdf
- ▶ PDF on employment resources
http://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/docs/employment_resources.pdf
- ▶ PDF for step by step guide to employment
http://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/docs/etk_step_by_step_guide.pdf
- ▶ PDF for transportation resources
http://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/docs/etk_transportation_options.pdf
- ▶ PDF for benefits and funding
http://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/docs/etk_benefits_and_funding.pdf

Upcoming Job Corps Disability Webinars		
Webinar	Date	Time (ET)
Disability Coordinator Orientation	July 15, 2014 July 16, 2014	4 pm 11 am
Maintaining and Managing the Applicant File Tracking Log	August 5, 2014 August 7, 2014	4 pm 11 am

Regional Disability Coordinators by Region	
Boston, Philadelphia, and Atlanta	Dallas, Chicago, and San Francisco
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